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### Climate Corps. Project Reflection

This semester, I had the opportunity to work with the Norfolk Conservation Commission on a project that aimed to identify threats to vulnerable habitats within the town, with a special focus on invasive plant species. While at times the project felt challenging and presented us with several obstacles, seeing the end result was extremely rewarding. I also had the chance to collaborate with Nicole, whose different background and expertise added valuable perspective to the project. I was also able to connect with and work with John Anderson, our contact at the Norfolk Conservation Commission. Hearing about his lived experience with Norfolk, being the former director of Aton Forest, and his knowledge of the town's ecosystem was a great learning experience. Nicole and I also learned about how different municipalities and their commissions work and had the opportunity to interact with the public.

Nicole and I faced many challenges while working on this project. One of the challenges was working together to combine our different writing styles and different opinions on the organization of our project. However, working through these challenges together and in a professional manner has strengthened my communication skills and ability to work well in team settings. One of the biggest challenges we had with the vulnerability assessment was before the mid-term when we discovered that there was no information specifically about where invasive plants were found in Norfolk. This was extremely difficult because this was my main contribution to the project. Nicole and I met with John and we decided that we would determine what invasive plants were in Norfolk based on the information about the habitats of invasive plants. While it was challenging to find this information at first, I was able to find a USDA

website that listed plant associations, soil pH, temperature ranges, soil type, and overall habitat information about each plant. I was able to research each plant and Nicole and I were then able to make connections between the habitats which were suitable for the plants and the information about each of Norfolk's vulnerable habitats. This was challenging for me at times because I like to feel completely confident in my answers and understanding of a topic. Analyzing the habitats and comparing them to Norfolk's habitats required me to think a bit more abstractly than I am used to. However, this project was able to push me out of my comfort zone in that sense, and help me better understand that uncertainty is always present in environmental planning and adaptations. Additionally, at times it was difficult because John has never worked with Climate Corps. Students before, which means Nicole and I did not get a lot of direction from John.

The highlight of this experience was presenting our work and receiving feedback from community partners. It was really rewarding to see that our research could be useful outside of the classroom. It made all the obstacles we faced worth it and it gave the project a sense of purpose that I haven't felt in most projects I have completed in classes at UConn. It also helped me to gain new knowledge about Connecticut, the environment, and climate adaptations. I set out this semester with the goal of learning new things, and I have achieved that in ways I definitely didn't expect. I have been pointing out invasive plant species around campus to all my friends. I also took a picture of a common reed I saw by my apartment (picture linked below).

My goal was to contribute to Norfolk's Conservation Commission in a meaningful way and be able to create a report and presentation that I was confident in and was well-received. Working as a team with Nicole, I feel as though we were able to meet this goal. Ultimately, I am grateful for John, Nicole, and everyone at Climate Corps for making this project and its meaningful contribution to climate adaptations possible. I am leaving this semester feeling

confident in my ability to work with diverse teams, and have gained both real-world experience and an understanding that uncertainty is present in environmental planning, and life in general. Overall, this project helped me to understand how to better face challenges in my academics, future career, and my personal life.

Picture of common reed I took on campus by my apartment:



Picture of me:

